

## OPEN LETTERS.

## A misunderstanding corrected.

Some time ago I was informed by a friend that Prof. Conway MacMillan in the introduction to his "Metaspermæ of the Minnesota Valley," had credited me with holding some remarkable views on the subject of botanical nomenclature that certainly had never occurred to my mind. I had some difficulty in consulting the book in question, as copies of it do not seem to be abundant in this part of the country, but finally succeeded in borrowing a copy for a somewhat hasty examination. I then found to my surprise that the author had cited me as an authority for the proposition that botanical nomenclature should be passed upon by a non-scientific commission, and referred to a communication of mine printed in the *GAZETTE*, XVI, 4, to support his statement. I am very sorry that any one could have so misunderstood my meaning, for my plea was for nothing of the kind. It was only for more intelligent appreciation of actual, practical needs, and present difficulties, and for more judicial and fair-minded consideration and less partisanship. I have faith enough to believe that there are in this country, as there certainly are in other countries, able botanists who are also men of affairs and men of sound judgment, men who can look beyond the walls of the herbarium and can realize that a theory should be subordinated to practical necessities. When the supply of such botanists fails us, it may then be time to consider the expediency of referring the question of botanical nomenclature to a non-scientific commission; but until then I should not wish to advocate such a treatment of the question even if I were as unthinking and unbotanical as Prof. MacMillan appears to consider me. Although men of intelligence and of practical acquaintance with the general laws of nomenclature are undoubtedly competent to pass on the nomenclature of a science to a certain extent, yet no one would claim for them alone the right to absolute and final decision of its problems.

While I consider that Prof. MacMillan's book reflects great credit on his industry and genius for compilation, yet, as a model local flora, it seems to me a number of steps in the wrong direction, especially in this case where, as the author himself states, the work is addressed to the people. As the book stands, an abridged or expurgated edition really appears to be a necessity if the volume is intended for popular use. I cannot, moreover, help regretting that the learned author has laid his work open in so many ways to the knife of an impartial critic, not to mention the assaults of an opponent. In such respects the book shows more partisan than judicial spirit—a failing much to be deplored in a work presumably printed at the public expense, and from which the public consequently has a right to demand a fair and impartial statement of disputed questions.—EDWARD L. RAND, *Boston.*